

Be careful what you say because you are the news

By Warren E. Nordman

Not that long ago, it was rare for an individual Soldier to be interviewed by the press. That was a role for the Public Affairs staff or senior-level commanders. During Operation Enduring Freedom and especially with the formal embedded media program in Operation Iraqi Freedom all of that changed. Now reporters are living, moving and talking with Soldiers every day.

The media reports coming from the battlefield were much more accurate and – equally important – were being told from a Soldier's perspective and not from information gleaned from a press briefing. The correspondents were eating MREs and enduring sand storms. Members of the press were injured and killed. They learned the hardships and sacrifices of a Soldier's life and could witness the Soldiers' dedication and professionalism up close and personal. Chad Flowers, a camera operator from WRAL, Channel 5 in Raleigh, N.C., said "I'd say we get along better with Soldiers than we do with each other."

The media want to talk with you because you are a Soldier, because you are an expert and because.....you are the news! The

Army has great stories to tell and people are very interested in hearing about what we do. Unfortunately, many Soldiers are reluctant to engage the media. It has been said that the human mind is a wonderful thing. It starts working the moment you are born and doesn't stop working until someone puts a microphone or camera in your face. Suddenly, all the knowledge and experience you have mastered goes out the window and you



Photo by Spc. Daniel T. Dark

In the modern military operational environment, Soldiers of all ranks must be prepared to interface with the media. NCOs may often serve as unit spokesmen, and they have a duty to ensure that junior Soldiers are prepared to speak with the media. Pre-deployment media training plays a crucial role in ensuring success.



U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Jeffrey A. Wolfe

have trouble remembering your own name. That thought causes many to avoid press interviews.

In fact, speaking with a reporter can be, and often is, a great opportunity. Soldiers should look at the event as simply a conversation with a purpose and not as an interview or interrogation. The conversation gives you a chance to tell the Army story, to speak to families and friends back home and to positively influence American public opinion. Every Soldier can be successful in media encounters with a positive attitude and by knowing a few rules of the road and observing basic "tips" for media interviews.

Attitude

Many of us harbor certain biases about people based on their professions whether the person is a lawyer, a doctor or a journalist. Some look upon reporters with distrust or